

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF

POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART

Fifth Series

ESTABLISHED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1832

No. 253.—VOL. V.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 1888.

PRICE 1½*l.*

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL.

THE Duke of Wellington is reported to have said that the art of war largely consists in correctly guessing 'what is on the other side of the hill.' We do not know whether he was thinking of the physical conformation of the country, in valley and river and plain, or of the number and disposition of the foes concealed by the intervening elevation. Perhaps both. In either sense the saying is applicable to the warfare of life.

The art of war, then, has something to do with the art of guessing; and a guess, if a good guess, is more than a guess. We wrestle with language in so saying, and an explanation is needed. The popular notion of a guess is—a perfectly haphazard solution—a chance pebble-stone out of the scrip of possibilities, slung at the problem. Such an utterly random shot scarcely requires an intellectual effort. It is the 'pure guess.' But the intelligent guess, the guess of effort and insight, the clever guess, is the combination of acute observation and sagacious inference, assisted, perhaps, by experience and analogy. The 'hills' of life, on the other side of which lies our fate, are frequently composed of the characters, the actions, the behaviour of our fellow-men. If we can tell with reasonable certainty what A, B, or C will do upon considering the circumstances that have arisen, or upon learning what we have done or said, then we can guess 'what is on the other side of the hill,' and act with decision upon our conjecture. Take an illustration: Two men were aware that each of them was going to tender for an important contract. They were in a coffee-room together, and each believed, correctly, that the other was meditating his tender, as he sat with letter-paper and blotting-book before him. At last, one of them, as if his mind was fully made up, took his pen, rapidly wrote some figures, took the ink off on the blotting-paper, placed the paper in an envelope, directed it, and left the room as if to post it. Directly he had gone, the other stole up to the vacated seat, held the blotting-paper up to

the light, made out the figures of the tender, and with a chuckle at his own ingenuity, forthwith filled up a tender for a slightly lower sum, and duly despatched it. But he did not get the contract; and curiosity at last drove him to ask the other man how it was. 'I suppose,' was the reply, 'that you found out what you thought I had tendered?'—'Yes.'—'You found it out by spying through the blotting-paper?'—'Yes.'—'I knew you would, and I misled you.'

The successful competitor made a correct guess of 'what was on the other side of the hill.'

The Italian game of *Mora*—the same game as the English 'Odd or Even'—finds its fascination in trying to probe the workings of your adversary's mind. Agonising are the efforts of the guesser to follow the probable surmises which his adversary has formed as to the degree of the guesser's penetration. The intricacy of the mental operation resembles the bewildering repeated reflections of reflections in two opposing mirrors.

The mysterious success of some business men, and the equally mysterious failure of others as honest and industrious and capable as they, depend on this faculty of correct guessing at 'what is on the other side of the hill'—a faculty which, as we have said, resolves itself mainly into observation and inference, aided by experience. Can this be cultivated? Unquestionably. No doubt the Red Indian of our childhood was partly a manufactured article from the brain of Mr Fenimore Cooper and other story-writers; but we suppose he was partly genuine, and that his remarkable dexterity in following up trails was not the invention of the novelist. How did he succeed where the white man would fail? Simply by trained observation. Observation depends upon voluntary attention, and that depends upon the interest felt in the object. Sometimes there is a portentously rapid natural development of the faculty of observation, as in the case of falling in love. Conversation without language in the case of disembodied spirits becomes an intelligible and credible theory to those who have passed through that region of romance.

But the faculty may be cultivated in a more mechanical way, with no intoxicating fragrance in the air. Robert Houdin the conjurer used to train his little son by causing him to pass at an ordinary pace before a shop-front full of miscellaneous wares and then ascertaining how many articles he could specify. By constant practice of this kind, remarkable proficiency may be attained in rapid cognition of a promiscuous assemblage of things flashed at once on the retina. And the absence of this power in average persons is what the conjurer may safely rely on for the success of many of his experiments. By some gesture or sound he compels the attention of his observers for a second of time, and in a fraction of that second the trick is done.

Education in rapid and comprehensive observation would be absolutely essential as 'standard work,' if it were not for the discipline of life outside of school-hours. There is great educational value in many games full of sweet allurement to the faculties. The *Kindergarten* system takes full advantage of this. There are plenty of inevitable thorns in the pathway of personal evolution we are called to tread; it is well, therefore, to plant flowers, where we can, in the little learner's pathway.

'What is on the other side of the hill?' is a question which, when put by children toiling up the mount of knowledge, and the still steeper ascent of moral self-conquest, can receive a full answer, though it be not free from that solemn incertitude which besets the future of us all. We can show them, in the example of adult lives in progress around them, that 'on the other side of the hill' is the tableland of manhood; and on the gently descending slope towards old age there are men doing noble work for their families, their town, their country, their race, and generation, with tools like to those the children are fashioning and learning to wield in their classes and in their worthier sorts of games. Dear boy! let me set you on my shoulder! See the Black Knight waving his tremendous axe in semicircles of light. Listen to the crash as it falls on the oaken postern of the ruffian's castle, where Ivanhoe and Rebecca are imprisoned! The flinders fly at the mighty strokes. The brave helmet flinches not under the rain of stones from above. The postern yields. In rush the Black Knight and his followers, and the prisoners are saved.—Go back to school, my boy, fired with enthusiasm to become a doughty warrior in the battle of life against the enemies of the life-eternal, and learn to handle your battle-axe.

There is a large element of certainty in the contour of 'the other side of the hill'; but can we make any safe calculations in the uncertain region of the actions, tempers, fortunes, of the other men and women whose lives will press against our own? We may cast our own horoscope, so far as it is governed by our moral character in early life, our struggles and our conflicts, our victories and defeats; but the vast ocean of our uncertainty about the doings and failings of the crowd of other souls who will jostle us in our road seems at first glance somewhat terrifying.

Take an illustration: Here is a trustee, one of three trustees to whose care large funds are committed under settlement or will. He knows

his co-trustees are honourable and exact men; and the understanding is that he is to be a passive trustee, ready to act if required, but not bound to trouble himself till called upon to intervene. Years roll on; one of his co-trustees dies. Another, with the best intentions, through mere muddle-headedness, loses a great part of the trust money. Then rises up a new generation of the beneficiaries, without generosity, or memory of the original understanding. They turn upon the passive trustee and demand accounts, vouchers, proofs, for all the period of the trust, and cast on him the responsibility of every mistake and all the losses. It is easy to get some lawyer, who will take only a dry legal view of the case, to fight it, and then the victim becomes defendant in a Chancery action. He knows with what cold-blooded justice most of our judges investigate the transactions of trustees, and very probably, though his conduct may have been high-minded and free from blame before heaven, he suffers heavy damages and costs, or pays 'blackmail' to purchase his manumission.

Now, when that trustee made the kindly mistake of becoming a trustee at all, could he have conjectured what was on 'the other side of the hill'? Ask him; and he will possibly reply: 'I could not have guessed all; but I might have guessed much—guessed enough to have prevented my accepting the perilous responsibility.'

It is 'easy to be wise after the event;' but he would not be wrong in making that reply. Let us consider what he knew. He knew the Sinaitic rigour of the English law against trustees; he knew the large proportion of ungrateful souls among every second generation of beneficiaries; he knew that for the majority of the human race the power to get money by ungenerous and ungrateful ways gets the mastery of nobler impulses; and knowing all this, had he not the means of guessing what was on 'the other side of the hill'?

Illustrations in abundance swarm on us when we peruse the advertisements in our daily papers: large incomes to be obtained with very slight effort—enormous mineral wealth lavishly offered to the public by projectors bursting with philanthropy, and only requiring the trifling mark of confidence indicated by applying for shares and paying a deposit—money lent on mere personal security; and so forth. These nets do catch birds; those webs do entangle flies; fishes do bite at these baits. And then we have wails from the victims. But did they try, before parting with their money, to guess what was on the other side of the hill, behind which they fondly thought they saw the sunrise of their fortunes? Did they consider the extreme improbability of any one in this selfish world being so devoid of relatives and friends as to be compelled to spend money in finding recipients for his glittering benefactions? Did they inquire of experts, before they imitated the Vicar of Wakefield's son and made their final exchange for a 'gross of green spectacles?' They knew that selfishness, self-interest, cupidity, were certainly on the other side of the hill, and perhaps they admit they might have made a better guess as to the rest of the prospect.

How often, in married life, is there occasion to lament that either husband or wife, or both, did

not more correctly guess what was on the other side of the hill, before the irrevocable words were exchanged? There are many aids to good guessing—testimony of friends and relatives, known hereditary proclivities, manifest tastes and tendencies. Let us admit that the greatest sagacity cannot always foresee what is likely to happen; but very often bystanders, as they see the pair of lovers mount the hill and disappear on the other side, can hazard a not very wide conjecture as to what will be found there.

But there is one code, or index, of certainties about what is 'on the other side of the hill,' which we have not yet opened—namely, the steadfastness of the moral as well as of the physical law. No one expects that on the other side of a literal hill water will flow upwards, or the law of gravitation tamely accept any insult, or light be reflected at any other angle than the angle of incidence, or sound-waves alter their velocity of vibration, or any other fundamental decree be changed. Yet there are people who seem to believe that on the other side of a metaphorical hill moral laws will be found entirely changed. Grapes will hang on thorns, and figs adorn thistles. Wild-oats are to be sown, and finest wheat reaped. If on 'this side of the hill' we firmly attach ourselves to some divine law or promise, the operation of which will not be exhausted on the journey, then we know what is on 'the other side of the hill'—namely, the working out of that law, the fulfilment of that promise.

'Across the border' is a phrase that starts many trains of meditation. How many times have we put our finger on one and another date in the calendar and said: 'On that day I shall cross the ridge; I shall look down into the valley on the other side of the hill, and enter on hitherto untried conditions of life.' There is the day when the lad leaves school 'for good.' One of the first twinges of sentiment that we can recall thrilled us when, in the dim light of seven o'clock on a December morning, we stood on the top of the hill opposite to that on which our boarding-school stood—the fly toiling up behind with luggage—and made out the obscure outlines of the house, the fir-grove behind, the fishpond in front, and well-known nooks and lanes that should know us again no more. The last view, in that winter's dawn, was so dim and ghostly, that it was more like memory than vision; and when the sun was up, we were far away. To how many horizon-lines, since our school-days, have we looked onward with the solemnity that befits the termination of an epoch, boundaries where we should take a farewell—half pitiful, half joyous—of the familiar, and clasp hands falteringly with the unknown! With what undefined misgivings, what plaintive music in the soul, as of an Aeolian harp voiced by melancholy autumn winds, have we left the old and well-known scenes behind us, and gone forth to meet the new!

The words 'never more' subdue the heart like slow soft organ music in the hush of dying day. And yet we must all have noticed that however great the change of circumstance might seem as we approached it, no sooner had we actually entered its circle than it began to take upon it a familiar appearance, as a noble father's Hall

might do to the eyes of a boy stolen from it in babyhood by gipsies. That for which God intended and fitted us can never long be strange. We daresay a butterfly, the moment its wings are dry, and it has taken a flutter or two, feels as if it had been a butterfly all its life. The ransomed and purified souls that have been long imprisoned in the larva of the body and the chrysalis of the tomb, will flash into a glorious familiarity with their new and splendid conditions of existence when they rise to meet their noble destiny.

MR ESHOLT'S YOUNG WIFE.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

By T. W. SPEIGHT.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the afternoon of the day following that of Peggy Myers's visit to Tydd Street, a cab stopped at the door of Mrs Strake's house, and presently the landlady in person appeared before Miss Granby, holding a visiting-card gingerly with a thumb and finger and a corner of her apron, for she had been interrupted in the middle of her breadmaking. Miss Maria took the card wonderingly, and read the name, 'Mr Robert Esholt,' aloud. 'Gracious me!' she exclaimed, dropping the card as though it were red hot; 'how has he found us out, I wonder, and what can he have come for? Dear, dear, and I with this shabby gown on!—Agnes, my love, not a syllable about the shirt-making.' She was all in a flutter, arranging her curls and her lace collar before the dingy glass over the chimney-piece.—'Now, Mrs Strake, I think you may show the gentleman in, please,' she said with a little gasp.

Then was Mr Esholt ushered into the dingy sitting-room, and coming forward, shook hands with Miss Maria. 'My dear Miss Granby,' he exclaimed, 'how happy it makes me to see you again after so long a time. Just the same as of old, I see. It might have been only yesterday that I saw you last, instead of fourteen long years ago.' Then turning to the white-faced invalid: 'You do not remember me, Miss Agnes, I daresay; but I have by no means forgotten you. The last time I saw you was when you were not much higher than this table. It was when I accompanied my brother Richard on one of his visits to the vicarage.—You are of course aware, Miss Granby, that I lost my brother some years ago.—He was one of your father's oldest friends, Miss Agnes; they were at college together, for Richard was originally intended for the Bar.' Mr Granby wrote me a most touching letter, after his death, which I have to this day, and shall always keep.—But, as I was saying, my brother and I visited at the vicarage fourteen years ago. I was but a young fellow then, while Richard's hair was turning gray.—Do you know, my dear young lady, that you were rather fond of me at that time, and many a romp we had together?—I knew you again in a moment, for all you have grown up, and have not nearly so much colour in your cheeks as you had in those days.'

He had kept on talking with a view of giving the ladies time to recover from the nervous perturbation into which his unexpected visit had evidently thrown them. He now drew up a chair,

and sat down with the air of one who was determined to make himself at home.

'Pray, Mr Esholt,' said Miss Maria, 'if I may venture to put such a question, by what means did you discover our humble retreat?'

'Oh, that's a secret,' answered Mr Esholt with a laugh, 'which I am bound under heavy pains and penalties not to divulge.—And allow me, with all respect, to remark that I think it was due to the friendship which has existed for so many years between the two families to have informed me long ago that you were in Liverpool, instead of allowing me to make the discovery through another channel.'

'Mr Esholt, sir,' replied the spinster, flushing painfully, 'you must be aware that my niece and myself are no longer in the same position that we were in two years ago—that our worldly circumstances are now greatly narrowed. We thought it only due to ourselves not to press our indigence on the notice of those who had known us under happier circumstances.'

'Fie! Miss Granby. I cannot agree with your philosophy at all. What is a friendship worth that will not help to ward off the strokes of ill-fortune? But I will lecture you on this subject some other day, and succeed in converting you, I trust, to a belief in a more charitable creed. For the present it is enough that I have found you, and you may rely upon it that I shall not readily lose sight of you again. I have been informed, how or by whom matters not, that Miss Agnes has been ordered to spend a month or two at New Brighton for the re-establishment of her health; and judging from her looks, I can well believe such to be the case.—Now, listen, please. I have a cottage at New Brighton ready furnished, with a housekeeper in charge of it. It was bought and fitted up for the use of my sister, who generally passes some weeks there every summer. At present, however, she is in North Devon, and the cottage is empty. Now, if you and Miss Agnes will go and take up your abode there for as long a period as you choose to stay, you are truly and sincerely welcome to do so, and you will be obliging me very much into the bargain.'

Miss Maria's fingers began to twitch and tremble, and for a moment or two she was unable to utter a word. Then she said: 'Really, Mr Esholt, while thanking you sincerely for your most generous offer, I am compelled to say that we shall be under the necessity of declining it. Neither my niece nor myself could think of putting ourselves under such an obligation to any one.'

'Miss Granby,' said Mr Esholt more gravely than he had yet spoken, 'it is absolutely necessary, so I am given to understand, that your niece should have the benefit of the sea-air. The means of obtaining what she requires are placed within your reach. Do you feel yourself justified, allow me to ask, in refusing those means, and thereby regarding your niece's recovery, and all for a slight question of obligation, as you choose to term it? Had your brother and mine been now alive, do you think that either of them would have hesitated to accept such a bagatelle at the hands of the other? While the memory of their friendship is with us, do not, I beg, stand on such trifling observances.'

Miss Granby was silent, if not convinced. Her mental perturbation was great. At length she

said: 'I will leave my niece to decide the question for herself.'

Mr Esholt turned to Agnes with a smile.

'What say you?' he asked.

'Oh, as for me, no one but myself knows how I long to get out of these close stifling rooms,' she replied, looking out wearily across the hot street. 'I want to sit on the sands and watch the waves and to feel the cool sea-breeze. Were I to say otherwise, I should not be speaking the truth.—Don't be angry, Aunt Maria, but I feel as if I should never get well while I remain shut up here.'

Mr Esholt had won the day.

So, before he went, it was agreed that the ladies should cross the river to New Brighton the next day but one. Meanwhile, he would arrange to have everything in readiness for their reception, and would come himself at the time appointed and see them safely to the end of their short journey.

Robert Esholt at this time was thirty-eight years old. He was tall and inclined to be thin, and had a very slight stoop of the shoulders. He had a long thin face and a prominent clear-cut nose. All the lines of his mouth and chin spoke of firmness and determination of will; but his eyes, of the darkest brown, rarely lost the kindly look which was natural to them, and lent a softness to his expression it would otherwise have lacked. His whole bearing was that of a keen clear-headed man of business, who knew his own mind and had the courage of his opinions. Few faces were better known on 'Change than that of Robert Esholt.

Mr Esholt's visit passed like a freshening breeze over the parched lives of our two ladies. Next day, Agnes felt decidedly better than she had done since the beginning of her illness. She was in a pleasant flutter of spirits, and could talk of little else than Mr Esholt's kindness and liberality and how she should enjoy herself at the seaside. Mr Esholt was there to the minute, and saw them safely across the water and duly installed in Syringa Cottage. It was small, but tastefully furnished, and had a pleasant outlook across the mouth of the Mersey. The housekeeper and a girl were there to wait upon them; and by some magic of which they were not cognisant, they found their table furnished in a style to which they had been strangers since Mr Granby's death, with all those little delicacies so tempting to an invalid's fastidious appetite, especially when coming unexpectedly. There, too, they found a well-filled bookcase, and, what to Agnes was more precious than all else, a piano. Her own instrument had gone, one among so many other cherished objects, at the sale, and ever since her arrival in Liverpool she had felt like a stranger in a thirsty land for want of it. To-day, as she touched the keys caressingly with her fingers, she could scarcely restrain her tears. But for all that, she felt happier than she had felt for several months past.

Miss Esholt being still from home, the loneliness of his bachelor establishment seemed to strike Mr Esholt in a way it had never done before during his sister's absences, so he asked permission to visit the ladies occasionally, a permission which they were only too happy to accord. So on Saturday afternoon he left his office earlier than

usual and found himself at Syringa Cottage soon after two o'clock. The ladies were out somewhere on the sands, he was told, so he went in search of them. He saw them in the distance, Agnes seated in a donkey-chaise, and Miss Maria walking by her side. He stood for a moment or two to contemplate the picture, and then went forward to meet them. The crisp salt air and the sunshine, combined, it may be, with Mr Esholt's sudden appearance, had called an evanescent wild-rose tint into Agnes's pallid cheeks. Mr Esholt was struck with her loveliness—for loveliness rather than beauty was the term to apply to her—as he had not been struck before. The ladies received him with unaffected pleasure, and they all wandered about together till Miss Maria declared that Agnes had been out quite long enough. Then they went indoors and had a cosy cup of tea, after which Agnes played for a short time, and then Mr Esholt rose to go. They pressed him to come again as soon as possible, and he was glad to promise that he would do so.

A month passed away, and found Mr Esholt at the Cottage two or three times a week. The fascination grew upon him, and he could not resist it—it may be that he made no effort to do so. It was something new to him, and he smiled when he thought of it, to find himself in the middle of the day longing for five o'clock to arrive; to find his thoughts, even when on 'Change, veering in the direction of the Cottage, while his eye would glance up unconsciously at the large clock visible thence and note the slow lapse of time. The ladies were quite as eager to see him as he was to hasten to them. He occupied their thoughts and monopolised their conversation in a way which could not but have flattered him had he been aware of it, while his more powerful mind dominated theirs and coloured their lives far more than they suspected.

The autumn days grew shorter, and Christmas was within measurable distance, but still Mr Esholt would not hear of the ladies leaving New Brighton. Whenever Miss Maria ventured to broach the subject, he put her down in a quick peremptory way which fluttered her nerves for an hour afterwards, and made her afraid to hint at such a thing for at least a week to come. His visits were still as frequent as at first; neither wind nor weather kept him away. He was regarded by both ladies with a feeling of lively friendship—a feeling which his every word and action led them to believe was reciprocated. Nothing in his speech or manner betrayed anything beyond that; but all his life he had been trained to conceal whatever feelings it did not suit him to show on the surface. He wore a mask habitually in business, and it had become so far a second nature with him to do so that he often forgot, or did not care, to lay it aside in private.

One wet Sunday evening after his usual quiet farewell, Mr Esholt held deeper communion than usual with himself on his way home. Standing near the funnel of the steamer, buttoned up in his waterproof and smoking his cigar, he pondered deeply a momentous question. 'I am decidedly in love with this girl,' he said to himself, 'and have been from that first Saturday when I saw her on the sands.' He was too sagacious and clear-headed to deceive himself in a matter about

which so many men are self-deceived. 'The question is, Shall I propose to her or shall I break the affair off?' He never for a moment doubted his ability to do the latter. 'I have no reason to believe her heart is touched in the least, so that at present it is a question which concerns myself alone. I must go abroad shortly on business. Why not make that my wedding trip also? or else take the opportunity to break through this enchanted web as harmlessly as may be? But why not marry her, provided always that she would have me, which seems somewhat problematical? For one thing, there is a great disparity in our ages; but let me only succeed in touching her heart, be it ever so slightly, and that difficulty, if it be one, will quickly vanish.—But what would Janet think and say?' That was the most awkward question of all—one which brought him, as it were, to a dead-lock.

He was still turning the point over in his mind, considering it from different points of view, when the steamer reached Liverpool. 'Come what may,' he said as he walked slowly across the landing-stage, 'this day fortnight I will either propose to Agnes, or take the express train and break the neck of my passion by flying southward for a week or two after the swallows.'

True to his self-made promise, Mr Esholt let matters go on as usual for another fortnight, showing neither by word nor sign that such things as love or marriage had any place in his thoughts. On the day fixed by himself he sought an interview with Miss Granby, and told her that he was desirous of marrying her niece, and wished to have her consent to mention the matter to Agnes. Miss Maria could hardly have been more surprised had the proposal been about to be made to herself. She held Mr Esholt in the greatest respect, and stood somewhat in awe of him as well, so that her consent was readily given, though she could not help shedding a few tears as she gave it, while thinking of all that she and Agnes had gone through during the last two years, and of the bright prospect that had now revealed itself so unexpectedly before them.

Agnes sat like one spellbound when Mr Esholt told her in a few brief impassioned words how deeply he loved her. Frost-bound, rigid as a statue, she sat, even after those strange words had ceased; while he stood before her, his elbow on the chimney-piece, waiting for her answer. Even in the midst of her surprise and dismay, it struck her as somewhat incongruous to hear this grave middle-aged man of the world disengaging in such wise to a girl like herself. It was as though some long extinct volcano had suddenly burst through the snows of centuries and revealed the fiery heart at work below; for to her youthful imagination Mr Esholt seemed far older than he really was.

Mr Esholt changed his balance from one foot to the other, and without thinking what he was doing, looked at his watch. He had not the slightest wish to hurry Agnes, but his business habits kept the upper hand of him even at a time like the present. The movement, slight as it was, brought Agnes back to actualities and helped to steady her thoughts. 'I cannot answer you at once, Mr Esholt,' she faltered. 'I must have time to think over what you have said. You have surprised me so much that I scarcely

know how to express myself. My aunt shall write to you.' And so, like a pale ghost, she flitted from the room. In her heart she thought she knew quite well what her decision would be, but just then she could not find courage to put it into words.

All the following week Mr Esholt was more assiduous at business than usual, and more silent and self-absorbed in manner; only when his letters were brought in each morning he turned them slowly over one by one, as half hoping, half dreading to find that which seemed so long in coming. It came at last, a tiny billet in Miss Granby's crooked, angular hand, containing but three lines—an invitation to tea for the following afternoon.

Mr Esholt's proposal to Agnes had opened the old wound afresh, which time was beginning to heal over. She was startled to find how dear to her heart the image of Wilmot Burrell still remained. It seemed like sacrilege to think of marrying another. The image was overthrown, never to be upreared again; but in her eyes it was beautiful still. Mr Esholt she respected, liked, looked up to with girlish reverence; but Wilmot, alas! she loved. Burning tears of love and shame watered her pillow again and again after Mr Esholt's declaration. Whether she married him or not, the future lay bare and bleak before her, uncheered by hope, without one ray of sunlight to brighten the path which led onward into the dim and unknown future.

Supposing she were to refuse Mr Esholt, she and her aunt could no longer continue to be the recipients of those kindnesses at his hands which had hitherto been put down to the score of the friendship which had existed between her father and the elder Mr Esholt. Indeed, their long sojourn at the Cottage had of late, as she knew, been a source of silent worry to Miss Maria, and it was only for the sake of her, Agnes's, health that they had not brought their holiday to a close some time ago. Now they must perform fall back into that hard-working, poverty-stricken life from which, by Mr Esholt's kindness, they had been temporarily rescued.

CUSTOMS' OFFICERS AND THEIR DUTIES.

It is thought that a brief description of the duties performed by a hard-working and unobtrusive body of public officials may be of interest to the readers of this *Journal*. For this purpose, it is proposed to take the case of an imaginary Customs' officer named Robinson, and to trace his progress through the various branches of his routine duties.

Entrance to the Customs, as practically to all the other departments of the Civil Service, is now obtained by means of success in a competitive examination. The subjects in which the candidate is examined are of an elementary nature; but on account of the keenness of the competition, a very high standard of proficiency is necessary to ensure success. For the purposes of this paper it is assumed that the examination has been successfully contested, that the inquiries as to age and character have been satisfactorily answered, and that the medical officer has certified

that the constitution of our friend Robinson is sufficiently strong to endure the fatigue consequent upon the performance of his duties. This being so, Robinson will in due course receive instructions to proceed to his destined port, in order to enter upon a career, which was once described to a friend of mine, by an enthusiastic but not disinterested 'coach,' as 'having all the romance of the sea with none of its hardships.'

On arriving at his destination, Robinson is allowed a day's grace in order to procure lodgings. These, as a general rule, he will share with a brother-officer; for the guinea a week with which he starts life does not admit of unnecessary expenditure, but, on the contrary, compels him at the outset to practise the most rigid economy. He will now, probably, find himself one of several officers of about the same age and placed in similar circumstances; and as it is presumed that he is not a man of unsocial habits or temperament, he will probably experience but little difficulty in the selection of a companion from among their number.

The port at which Robinson is now stationed is assumed to be neither London nor Liverpool, but what is technically known as an 'outport,' of medium size and importance. Here he will find that his duties may be roughly divided into three great sections, each of which we will briefly describe.

The day of grace having expired, Robinson has to enter upon the duties of his new vocation. Punctually at eight o'clock he presents himself at the custom-house to sign the Attendance Register, and is then instructed that his first duty will be that which is commonly known as 'Rod and Basket Duty.' Robinson hereupon proceeds to a storeroom, from which he procures his various implements of war. These consist of a covered basket containing six sample bottles, a 'fleech' for extracting spirits from casks, and last, but not least, some pointed pieces of chalk. From the examining officer whom he is deputed to assist he will in addition obtain a set of gauging-rods. These rods, together with the basket, &c., Robinson has to carry from warehouse to warehouse in the wake of his superior officer. In the bonded warehouse itself his duties are of a very simple and likewise of a very monotonous character. He has to attend upon the examining officer when that official is occupied in gauging the contents of casks. With the chalk he notes down on the cask-head the various particulars and dimensions as dictated by his superior officer, and with the fleech he extracts samples, in order that their strength may be tested. Occasionally, Robinson may be required to supervise the operations performed in the warehouse by the merchants themselves; but the general nature of his duty will be such as has just been described. The work is monotonous in the extreme; but as the hours are not excessively long, he will possess a fair amount of leisure for recreation or self-improvement.

At the end of three months Robinson receives instructions that he must now take his turn at 'Rummaging Duty,' which, as the name implies, consists in the examination of vessels in search of contraband goods. This duty is entrusted to various superior officers known as 'tide surveyors,' each accompanied by two subordinates, one of

the class to which Robinson is supposed to belong; the other an unestablished officer or 'extra-man.' The staff in a medium-sized port consists of four tide surveyors and their eight subordinates. The *modus operandi* is as follows: Immediately upon the arrival of a vessel from a foreign port, she is boarded by the tide surveyor and his two satellites. They at once proceed to examine the baggage of the passengers, if any, as also the stock of tobacco, &c. in the possession of the captain and crew. This having been done, the vessel itself is subjected to a minute and exhaustive search. Bunks are overhauled, sails and coils of rope displaced, tons of iron cable lifted, and every nook and cranny made the object of thorough investigation. This work is of a protracted and arduous nature; but not until it has been completed does the tide surveyor leave the vessel.

Work commences at eight o'clock in the morning, and lasts continuously for twenty-four hours until eight o'clock the next morning. An intermission of twenty-four hours then occurs before the resumption of duty. This is effected by dividing the staff of tide surveyors, &c., into two sections, each of which performs duty on alternate days.

Robinson having commenced duty at eight o'clock in the morning, is busily occupied in rummaging fresh arrivals, and in re-rummaging vessels already examined, until six o'clock in the evening, with, if circumstances will permit, a brief respite for dinner. About six o'clock the whole of the staff repair to the watch-house, where three-hour watches are set, ship-fashion, for the next twelve hours. In the watch-house, sleeping accommodation is provided of a very plain description, usually consisting of a mattress, an uncovered bolster, and a pair of blankets for each officer. It must not, however, be imagined that Robinson will be able to secure an uninterrupted night's repose. Such an event may happen, it is true, but will not be of such frequent occurrence as the occasions upon which he will be continuously employed during the whole of the twenty-four hours.

During the time that the watches are in operation, the rest of the staff remain in the watch-house yarning or sleeping; while the officer on duty is stationed at the dock or pier-head on the lookout for fresh arrivals. Upon the approach of a vessel from foreign ports it is his duty immediately to notify the fact to the tide surveyor. He then arouses the two subordinates and also the officers stationed on board the vessel. The arousing of the officers and their arrival at the scene of action does not occupy much time; for, by experience, they are accustomed to be on the alert at a moment's notice, and soon slip on the boots, coats, and hats—the only articles of clothing of which they had divested themselves.

As the rummaging of a steamer takes at the very least two hours to perform, it will be seen that anything more than a cat-nap in the way of sleep is generally impossible. At six o'clock in the morning the watches cease so far as the ordinary outdoor officer is concerned; and at eight o'clock or thereabouts he is released until the next day.

The foregoing is a brief outline of a day's work as it would occur at an outport, although at different ports the details may somewhat vary. At

most it will be necessary that Robinson should occasionally help to man the Customs' boat in cases where vessels do not come into dock, but remain at anchor in the roads or river, as the case may be.

The performance of Rummaging Duty is not only laborious but, as may be supposed, little conducive to personal elegance. Robinson will probably at the outset have provided himself with a suit of overalls to protect his ordinary clothing, and will now become practically acquainted with the unique properties of soft soap for removing tar and grease from face and hands. He has to brave the utmost inclemency of the weather, and likewise the extremes of heat and cold; for it will often be his lot, when perspiring from every pore, to emerge from the engine-room or stoke-hole of a newly arrived steamer into the cold air of a gusty and drizzling night. The occasions also will not be unfrequent when he will incur great danger of finding a premature and a watery grave.

The tools required are neither numerous nor complicated; indeed, they may be said to consist of but two articles—a combined steel wrench and hammer, and a powerful bull's-eye lantern. The former is used for various purposes, but mainly for prising open; the latter is absolutely necessary, because the greater portion of the work is performed either in total darkness or in places very dimly lighted.

When three months have expired, our friend will be again transferred, this time to what is known as Boarding Duty. Robinson is now stationed on board a vessel from the time of her entry into port until such time as she again sails or is cleared by the Customs' authorities. It will be his duty to supervise the unloading of the cargo, in order that no portion may be surreptitiously removed; and he must also keep a sharp watch that the sailors do not convey any tobacco ashore. Robinson will generally be observed standing near one of the hatches supervising the operations of the stevedore, but occasionally quitting his post for the purpose of searching a sailor who is making his way ashore. As he is required to sleep on board the vessel, he will probably, from his experience of multifarious sleeping-places, become a philosophical campaigner before the expiration of his term of office. By the Customs' regulations, the owner of a vessel is required to provide the officers with sheltered accommodation; but Robinson will find that these regulations will be construed in widely different senses. In some cases he may be allowed the use of the cabin cushions; in some he may be granted the use of the chart-room; and in some he may even be furnished with a bunk; but, on the other hand, it will often be his lot to be provided with no better accommodation than a few sails, or the top of a sailor's chest in an unsavoury forecastle.

Boarding Duty is performed by either one, two, or three officers, when it is respectively known as Single, Double, or Treble Boarding.—Single boarding is the method adopted in the case of small vessels, or of vessels which, from the Customs' point of view, are of no great importance, and which will often remain in port for a considerable time. One officer is stationed on board, where he will remain for the whole period of her stay. A reasonable amount of time is allowed for

sleeping purposes, and, beyond the monotony of the duty, no great hardship is incurred. The officer will, however, in many cases be compelled to remain on board for a fortnight or three weeks at a stretch.—Treble boarding is the method adopted in the case of very large vessels, where it is considered that for the protection of the revenue three officers are necessary. Here the officer, although often on board for a considerable length of time, will obtain eight hours' sleep each night; but every third night this sleep will consist of two portions of four hours, with an intermediate watch of four hours on deck.—Double boarding, the method adopted in the case of vessels of medium tonnage, is at the same time the most common and the most laborious. Indeed it is probable that at an outport, Robinson will be little acquainted, if at all, with the other two methods. Two officers are stationed on board a vessel, where they remain during the whole of the time she is in port. With the exception of the periods allowed for breakfast and dinner, both must be on deck from six o'clock in the morning until six in the evening. The remaining twelve hours are divided between them for sleep; one officer being on deck while the other is below. The authorities do not permit an officer to keep the same watch on two consecutive nights, and hence each is compelled every alternate day to keep a continuous watch of twenty-four hours.

In order to explain the nature of the duty and the alternation of the watches, it is assumed that a vessel arrives in dock on Monday morning. Robinson and another officer are immediately stationed on board. Both remain on deck until six o'clock in the evening, when Robinson goes below for six hours. The probability is that during these six hours he will be unable to obtain much if any sleep. At midnight he is aroused by his mate, who then turns in for six hours. Robinson has now to remain on watch for the next twenty-four hours, until twelve o'clock on Tuesday night, when he again turns in. On Wednesday he will be on deck for twelve hours, and on Thursday again twenty-four. This alternation continues during the whole of the time (from three to ten days) that the officers are stationed on board. The time allowed for sleep is sufficiently scanty even if obtained in its entirety; but as it frequently happens that a vessel does not arrive in dock until a late hour in the evening, or, when in dock, works after hours—in which event both officers must remain on deck—even this allowance is often curtailed.

Robinson will now find that although he has been to a certain extent inured to hardship by his experience of rummaging, the fatigue entailed by the performance of boarding duty will be a serious strain upon his constitution. Eighty to ninety hours will be no uncommon week's work; and it is possible that he will in one week be on duty for one hundred and thirty-two hours, including meals, &c., out of which one hundred and eight will be occupied in actual watch.

While on boarding duty, it will be often a difficult task for Robinson even to keep his eyes open. Many will be the temptations to take a short nap; but these temptations, however strong they may be, must be strenuously resisted. The officers are visited at unfixed and uncertain periods

by the tide surveyors, and woe befall our friend if at any of these visits he be found napping! Such an event would, in the first instance, incur for him a severe reprimand, and if repeated, would entail the loss of his commission.

While employed at boarding duty, Robinson will obtain but little leisure, and of such leisure small portion only can be devoted to purposes of recreation or self-improvement. As the hours allowed for sleep are few and irregular, our friend when relieved from duty will generally find himself so thoroughly overcome by bodily fatigue, that, probably, it will be his first care to get between the sheets as speedily as possible. He will consider himself especially fortunate if he be able to sleep at home during two nights in any one week; and cases will occur in which he will not pass a night at home for a considerable period.

At some ports the system of boarding has been superseded by what is known as Patrol Duty, the mode apparently in vogue at French and Belgian ports, and the nature of which duty is not dissimilar to that of an ordinary police constable. The various docks, &c., are divided into sections, for one of which an officer is responsible, in the same manner as a policeman for his beat. In these circumstances each officer is on duty eight hours a day.

At boarding duty, Robinson will probably be retained for a period of three months, at the expiration of which he will again be transferred to the bonded warehouses; and in the regular rotation of warehouse duty, rummaging, and boarding, he will be employed for the next four or five years. At the expiration of that time, if not previously promoted, he will probably be relieved from the performance of the latter two forms of duty, and henceforth his work will be confined to the bonded warehouses. By seniority and merit, he may then obtain brevet rank, and be employed in cases of emergency as gauger or tide surveyor.

In the foregoing sketch, the ports of London and Liverpool have been purposely excluded, more especially the former. Everything at these ports is necessarily on a larger scale than at an outport; consequently, at these ports the officer to a certain extent becomes a specialist, and is confined more or less to one class of duty. At London, for instance, Robinson would have no experience of rummaging duty, as that duty is performed by a separate class of officials; but for the first four or five years of his career he would be employed at the still more arduous and uncongenial boarding duty.

Thus far we have traced the career of the outdoor officer, and here it is proposed to leave him. He may, it is true, attain to higher positions; but the life as previously sketched is the life of the rank and file, who, as may be supposed, form the great majority.

At the expiration of three years, an outdoor officer is qualified to compete for the position of examining officer, which promotion is the reward of success in a literary competitive examination. If successful, he will be eligible thereafter for promotion to the highest positions in the service; for, like the private soldier of Bonaparte's army, the outdoor officer, figuratively speaking, carries in his knapsack the bâton of a marshal.

There would appear to be a somewhat common opinion abroad according to which a Civil Servant is regarded as a person who, for a high salary, does nothing six hours a day, and who, in order to recruit his exhausted energies, requires an annual vacation of not less than six weeks. It will be seen that the Customs' officer at least cannot with justice be included in such category. Sinceures in the Civil Service, if existent, should in the true interests of Civil Servants themselves be instantly abolished. Any scheme of reform, either in the Customs as a department or in the Civil Service as a whole, must ultimately benefit the rank and file; and by the rank and file such measures of reform should be not only ardently desired but eagerly sought for. Among those who would participate in the benefits of such reform, not the least worthy would be the outdoor officers of Customs, the career of one of whom has formed the subject of the preceding sketch.

A FAMILY SECRET.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

BY CHARLES GIBBON.

CHAPTER I.—WHO IS SHE?

JOE SUFFLING, miller, was making his way home rather late at night across a broad stretch of sand-heaps and sand-hollows, diversified with patches of green turf and low-lying clumps of gorse, locally known as the Denes. On one side, the Denes are bounded by the sea; on the other, by many miles of marshland made profitable to graziers by drainage. The moon was at its full, and there was little wind, so that the deep voice of the sea was a murmur rather than a roar.

Joe's windmill stood in a solitary position on the common, about a mile north of Great Yarmouth market-place. It was not a spot likely to be visited at that time of night by strangers for mere pleasure. Two of the long arms of the windmill rose up like black shadows in the moonlight; and as Joe advanced cheerfully towards his home, with steady steps accustomed to the uncertain nature of the ground, he was startled by an unexpected sight and halted staring. A tall woman stood motionless on one of the bits of rising ground. She was dressed in black and was gazing seaward. She stood so still that Joe thought the figure was like a black stone statue, for the wind did not stir the folds of her dress. She was standing directly in Joe's path not far from his gate, and he must pass close by her, unless he made a circuit down one of the deepest of the sand-hollows. He hesitated for a minute and then proceeded, saying 'Good-evenin'' as he passed.

The woman did not respond or move, and the whiteness of her face scared the miller, with the fancy that she might be a corpse. Unpleasant as the fancy was, he could see that the face was very beautiful, and instinctively recognised her as a lady.

'Nan,' he said to his wife as he burst into the cottage, 'there be a lady standin' out yonder like one o' them stone statues in the Duke's gardens—only they be white, an' she all black, barrin' her face—that be as white as death.'

'A lady standin' out there at this time o' night!' exclaimed the buxom wife incredulously. 'Some gipsy tramp, more like.'

'Nay, none o' that sort. Yeow come an' look for yeowself; she be nigh the gate.'

'Did yeow speak to her?'

'I gave good evenin'; but there was never a word or sign in answer. Maybe she be in one o' them fits that fixes yeow so that yeow can't move.'

Nan had a warm heart for any sufferer, and at this suggestion went out at once to the gate with Joe. She saw the motionless black figure standing in the moonlight about twenty yards from the gate; and brave little woman as she was to live with her husband in such solitary home, a thrill of superstitious awe passed over her. The hour, the place, and the hushed wind, with the deep moaning of the sea, combined to suggest that there was something uncanny in the appearance of that lone black figure. The appearance of a black dog late at night foreboded death to some one. What might not this strange visitant bode?

'Yeow go speak again, Joe,' said Nan in a low voice; 'an' if she be in trouble or have lost her way, ask her to come into ours.'

'Hadn't yeow better go?' answered the husband sheepishly. 'Likely, she'd speak to a woman more free than to a man.'

'No, go yeow; I'll be here ready to come if wanted.'

Joe hesitatingly once more advanced towards the black figure, and, as his footsteps could not be heard on the sand or turf, he coughed loudly to make his approach known. But no effect of that kind seemed to be produced. When within a few paces, he halted. 'Beggin' pardon, ma'am,' he said respectfully, 'but my missus have sent I to ask if so be as yeow have lost yeow way?'

The head moved, and two bright dark eyes shone upon him from the white face. She answered in a tone that had no feeling in it—not the faintest note of gratitude for the evident kindness of the miller's inquiry: 'No.'

'Maybe yeow want to find some place here-about?'

'No.'

Joe pondered for a minute: if she had not lost her way and did not want to find any place thereabout, then that fixed gaze towards the sea had a terrible significance.

'Ben't there anythin' we can do to help yeow?' he said as a last attempt to understand the position.

'No.'

He looked at her pityingly and much puzzled. She was again looking fixedly seaward. He was about to turn away in order to come to consult Nan as to what had better be done next, when there was a moan, and the woman fell to the ground. The miller was on his knees beside her in a moment, lifting the inanimate form, whilst Nan scurried across to his assistance.

'I knew the poor creature were a-thinking of drownin' herself,' said Joe; 'an' she been a trying of it already, for her skirts be drenched with water.—Lost heart, I suppose, an' turned back without havin' quite made up her mind.'

'Lord ha' mercy on us!' exclaimed Nan piously and sympathetically, 'whatever can ha' tempted her to that?'

'Lord alone know.—But yeow run on, Nan, an' get a place ready for her to lie on, an' I'll carry her in.' He lifted the stranger in his strong arms as if she had been an infant and carried her into the cottage. Nan had hastily stretched out one of those small iron chair bedsteads before a blazing fire in the kitchen, and he laid his burden upon it.

'She look like dyin,' whispered Nan, hastily unfastening everything about the lady's neck and taking off her bonnet.

'She do,' acquiesced the miller; 'an' that be awkward for we, seein' as we know nothin' about her. Maybe we ought to tell constable.'

'Constable!' ejaculated Nan indignantly, for the deathly white face had won her keenest sympathy. 'The poor thing be in dire trouble o' some sort. Take the pony an' fetch the doctor—that be what yeow are to do; an' I'll get off them wet things an' put dry ones on her.'

Joe rarely disputed any decision of his wife, especially when it was, as generally happened, on the side of kindly action. He therefore harnessed the pony to a light spring cart and drove into Yarmouth for the nearest doctor.

'Yeow see, sir,' said Joe in response to the doctor's expression of astonishment that he should have taken so much trouble about an entire stranger, 'we couldn't let her die at our very door as it might be without tryin' to do somethin'. There weren't likely anybody else to come that way to help her.'

'Very good of you; and your place is so lonely that it is most mysterious how she should come there.—You say she is a lady?'

'A born lady, I'll be bound.'

'Some family rupture, no doubt,' muttered the doctor.

They were driving back to the mill during this conversation, and the doctor was wondering if he should find in this curious case a commonplace incident of domestic quarrel and a passionate woman foolishly attempting to commit suicide, or something of a more romantic nature.

John Aynsley was only thirty-five, and he had not yet lost the speculative imagination of youth; so that the circumstances which Joe had detailed interested him and set his fancy at work.

On arriving at the mill, the patient was still insensible; but her wet things had been removed, and she was now wrapt in warm blankets, whilst Nan had a cup of tea ready for her as soon as consciousness returned.

When Dr Aynsley took the lamp which Nan offered him, and examined his patient's face, he started, and with difficulty restrained an exclamation of surprise. He looked more closely, and then mentally said: 'No—it cannot be. It is impossible—and yet the resemblance is very striking.'

When he rose from his stooping position there was professional calmness in his manner and expression. He had brought with him such restoratives as he deemed requisite—from Joe's description of the case, and he now proceeded to apply them. Nan had already tried burnt feathers sedulously, but without apparent effect. Now, however, the woman began to breathe more audibly, and by-and-by, after a long inspiration like a heavy sigh, slowly opened her eyes. They

blinked as if the light pained them, and the doctor motioned to Nan to put the lamp aside.

Whatever recognition there might have been on Aynsley's part, there was no recognition of him in the invalid's eyes. They were fixed on him with the same stony stare with which she had regarded the miller. There was no meaning in them. The expression was that of a somnambulist. Although life was restored to the body, it was evident that the mind was still vacant. Suddenly she attempted to rise; but her spasmodic effort failed to do more than slightly raise her head, which instantly fell back on the pillow. Then there was an hysterical sob, and the young doctor was not displeased to hear it, for to him it was a sign of returning sense. But to Nan it was a most distressing sound, and although not given to such weakness, she gave vent to an involuntary sob in sympathy. They were all startled by what followed, and the miller and his wife drew back a pace, as if frightened.

'My babe, my babe!' murmured the woman gaspingly; 'they say I caused your death. I!—I!—I!—But they wish me dead, and they will have their wish.—Oh, my babe!'

'This is some delusion due to severe mental distress,' hastily whispered the doctor to the horrified couple who had succoured the stranger. 'Pay no attention to anything she may say in her present state.'

'They wish me dead, and they will have their wish,' repeated the sufferer, more distinctly than before, whilst she moved nervously on the narrow couch, as if struggling to rise from it.

The doctor succeeded in administering another dose of medicine—a sedative this time—and in a little while it appeared to soothe her. She closed her eyes and seemed to sleep. Whilst giving the draught, the doctor observed a gold locket on her neck bearing initials. 'It is she!' he muttered to himself; and then turned to Nan: 'Have you a spare bed?'

'That we have, but'—

'It is impossible to remove the lady at present,' interrupted the doctor. 'I know who she is, and you will have no reason to regret any kindness you may show her.'

'We don't want nothin' for doin' as we would be done by,' answered Nan frankly; 'but it frightened me to hear what she say.'

'I have told you that she is suffering under some temporary delusion, from which she will recover with a few days' rest. I know the lady, and will be responsible for her.—You need fear no risk in sheltering her till she can be safely removed elsewhere. She has been evidently suffering severely both in mind and body.'

'That be clear enough, poor deary,' said Nan, again all sympathy; 'an' mayhap it be the loss of her little one that have upset her.'

'Not a doubt of it; and the loss of the child accounts for her being dressed in black, as your husband told me she was.'

'That be true, an' I'd never believe that such a fine-lookin' lady could ever do anythin' so dreadful as she was sayin' some un say she did.'

'I'll stake my life on that.' This was uttered with such impulsive earnestness, that Nan's quick eyes scanned John Aynsley's face, and discovered the secret he had thought long buried in his own heart, never to be revealed to mortal.

'Since yeow know the lady, doctor,' observed the good woman softly, 'what may her name be?'

At this question Aynsley looked unaccountably awkward. Recovering himself, he took the patient's left wrist gently as if to feel her pulse, but he glanced at the fingers and saw the wedding ring.

'For the present,' he said in an undertone, 'you may call her Mrs Fairfax.'

During this whispered conversation, the subject of it had remained perfectly motionless; but careful as Aynsley had been, the sound of the name he gave seemed to reach her. She started, shivering as with cold, and looked up wildly, but did not speak. He saw that he was still unrecognized, and was glad of it.

'You are better now,' he said gently, 'and you will soon be well, for there are kind friends beside you.'

'Kind friends!' she echoed feebly; 'my father is dead; my babe is dead, and I have no friends.'

'Hush! You must not speak now. You must rest.'

The strangely bright dark eyes were fixed on the man's face with an inquiring expression. She seemed to be searching her mind for some lost memory, and failing to find it, the eyelids closed again.

He turned away as if for some reason, eager to escape from that searching gaze. 'I should like to see her settled for the night before I go, Mrs Suffling. Can you manage to get her into bed?'

'Surely, for I can lift her as though she was a child, tall though she be.'

'Then your husband and I will take a turn outside until you call us.'

The miller had been all the time standing aside, alternately scratching his head and observing the speakers. He was much puzzled by what he saw and heard, but discreetly left the whole management of the strange affair to his 'missus' and the doctor. He felt it a relief to get out into the fresh air; and as a still further relief to his perplexed wits, he instantly lit his pipe.

The miller's cottage stood under the shadow of the mill and within a dozen yards of it. The dwelling was a long low one-story erection, the walls constructed of small flints deftly plastered together. There were no windows on the east side, for the cruel east wind had to be kept out by every practicable precaution. A long black wooden shed served for stable, cart-house, cow-house, and piggery.

Joe Suffling was in his way a prosperous man, and on ordinary occasions was fond of calling the attention of any visitor to the improvements he had made and intended to make about the place. The moonlight was sufficiently clear to have enabled him to indulge this harmless vanity even now; but his thoughts were otherwise occupied. They found expression in this abrupt fashion: 'I don't like this business, doctor—not that I doubt but you'll see we all right. But there ben't no manner o' question she was a-tryin' to drown herself; an' it 'ud be awkward if she tried it again while in our hands.'

'She has not strength enough to walk a dozen yards without help.'

'I see you start when yeow look at her, sir,' continued the miller, 'an' I say to myself—That

be good. Doctor know her. Seem to me, then, that bein' so, her friends ought to be brought here at once; an' if they be anywhere about here, though it be five mile off, I'm willing to go, late as the hour be.'

'Wait till I call in the morning, Suffling. Then I expect Mrs' (a little hesitation here) 'Fairfax will be able to explain matters to me, and I shall know what to do.'

'But maybe her friends be in a way about her.'

'Her friends may be; but think what a storm there must have been to drive her from amongst them! We must think of her first, and of her friends afterwards. They must have been very cruel to her in some way.'

'If I was sure of that—'

'Never mind them at present. Let us wait to hear what she has to tell and learn what her wishes are. You and your wife have acted most generously and kindly; don't spoil it all by talking about her friends. They must be strange people to have driven her to this.' The last sentence was spoken to himself rather than to his companion, and there was a distinct tone of bitterness in it.

The miller took several long meditative whiffs and then he spoke: 'So be it, doctor: I say no more. I'd be mortal sorry to do anythin' that 'ud make the poor lady worse than she be already.'

They had been walking up and down, and at this point they were near the door of the cottage. Nan was standing at it.

'She be abed now, sir, an' quiet as a lamb.'

The doctor saw his patient again. She was sleeping calmly and breathing regularly. He gave Nan sundry instructions, and promised to be with them early in the morning. Joe offered to drive him home, but the doctor preferred to walk. Strangely, too, he preferred the longest route—that over the Denes and by the shore, instead of the highway. He had been much more agitated than his manner suggested whilst in the cottage, and he wanted to walk it off. There was something peculiarly painful, after years of absence and silence, in meeting under such strange circumstances the woman he had loved—and found he still loved.

John Aynsley's father had been a clerk in a Norwich bank—a quiet, retiring man, without any of those qualities of 'push' or 'go' which are necessary to procure promotion. No fault was ever found with his figures; he was steady and painfully industrious in the discharge of his duties. Yet, whilst he plodded faithfully on through the routine of his daily office-work, younger men passed him rapidly, and he was doomed to remain a mere book-keeping machine at a salary of one hundred pounds a year. On this income he married, and, as is generally the case with people who have small means, he was blessed with a large family—eight, seven of them being daughters. He was still further blessed, however, in having a shrewd practical wife, who was skilled in domestic economy, and could make a leg of mutton last as long as if it had been a whole sheep.

John was the eldest of the eight, and inherited his mother's abilities. He early distinguished

himself at school ; he won scholarship after scholarship, so that from the age of fourteen he did not cost his parents a penny. He had decided upon entering the medical profession, and at twenty he obtained his degree of M.B. Immediately thereafter he was engaged as assistant to a country practitioner, and through the following years was able to give material aid to his parents. At twenty-four, having attained the dignity of M.D., he became assistant to Dr Fairfax, who had an extensive practice in Norwich, and an only daughter, Mina. Then commenced the sorest trial of John Aynsley's life. The girl was little more than sixteen, but she was so tall and so dignified in her bearing, that she appeared to be a full-grown woman. The gentleness and simplicity of her manner did not alter this impression, and those who saw her preside at her father's table—for he had been long a widower—were astonished when they learned her age.

John Aynsley was in love. He knew it, and bravely combated the most glorious vision of happiness he had ever known or could ever hope to know. He dare not think of it, remembering that his parents needed help with their troop of girls. He dare not think of it—at least not for years to come, when he should have won a position which would entitle him to speak. Therefore, he spoke no word ; and yet sometimes Mina was so frank and kind with him that he fancied if circumstances had been different he might have won her. He put the fancy away from him as arrogant madness. But the temptation to speak was terrible. He struggled against it for a year ; and then he decided that he must save himself by flight. So he announced his intention of leaving Norwich. Dr Fairfax, not suspecting the reason for Aynsley's sudden determination, and knowing his value as well as feeling deep interest in him, endeavoured to dissuade him from it. He even hinted at the prospect of arranging a partnership at an early date. But there was only one arrangement which could have altered Aynsley's resolve, and he saw no prospect of that being made, kind as his friendly chief was ; so he carried out his plan. He sought and obtained an appointment as medical officer on board an emigrant vessel, and for about eight years continued to serve in that capacity on various lines. He saw much of the world, made many friends ; but Mina was in his heart still—the hopeless love for her as strong and painful as ever.

Whilst at Bombay, on the last voyage he intended to make before settling down on shore, he received a letter from one of his sisters, which, amongst other items of home-news, contained the following passage : ‘By the way, do you remember Mina Fairfax?’ (Did he remember ! As if he ever could forget !) ‘She is going to be married. I believe it is a great match—some rich young county Squire. I don't know who he is, as the affair is to be conducted very privately, and I suppose there will be no cards.’

He felt a twinge of pain, and a sense of sickness for a few moments, thereby understanding that in spite of himself, in spite of time, absence, and protestations that he must not think of ever winning Mina Fairfax, there had lurked somewhere in his heart a shadowy hope that some day fortune might favour him.

He was depressed by the news, but not sur-

prised. He only wondered that she had not been married sooner—she was so beautiful and gifted. He was sorry to discover that unconsciously he had still cherished vain hopes, and now it seemed a relief to know that he must think of her only as a loved one dead. He might indulge in sweet memories of the dead, although it was denied him to think of her living.

So he made no inquiries about the marriage ; and even when he returned to Norwich, some time afterwards, he never asked the name of Mina's husband. That was why he had looked awkward when the miller's wife asked the lady's name, and had answered : ‘For the present we will call her Mrs Fairfax.’

TIMBER'S HIDDEN ENEMIES.

ANY one who has given the matter a thought must have been struck with the amazing length of time it takes for knowledge of any kind to filter down to the masses, and in no case is this more glaringly apparent than in the manner of treating timber in building. In spite of the voluminous warnings and admonitions that have gone forth on this head, the old mistakes and antiquated erroneous systems are repeated and perpetuated day by day. Like all else in this world of change and decay, timber must eventually yield to the inevitable ‘dust to dust,’ but that is no reason why we should not endeavour to postpone the evil day by every means in our power, by invoking the aid of science and the experience of former generations. The following remarks are confined exclusively to timbers that are hidden from sight, such as floor-joists and ends buried in masonry or in the earth, all of which lie within the province of the carpenter, not trespassing on that of the joiner, whose handiwork in the shape of doors and windows is fully exposed to view.

Since the quality, strength, and durability of timber are all greatly influenced by the season in which the tree is felled, we may state that winter, when but little sap is flowing, and the various fungi are dormant or dead, is the fittest season in this country ; that trees which have nearly done growing afford the best timber, as there is but little sapwood in them, and their heartwood is in the best condition ; and that as soon as possible after felling, the bark should be stripped, the trunk roughly cut up into the forms that it will eventually be required to serve, and the pieces stacked to season, under cover, if possible, in such a manner as to admit the greatest quantity of light and air. Timbers that have been thoroughly well seasoned and properly placed in position have been known to last without any apparent deterioration for several hundred years. In an ever-growing country like England, where the number of buildings increases year by year, it is an absolute impossibility to keep up the necessary supply of properly seasoned timber, which unfortunate fact should spur us to employ every

artifice and means to lengthen the period of its healthy existence.

Its greatest enemy in this country is undoubtedly *dry-rot*, though how the epithet 'dry' ever came to be applied to this fungus, the very essence of whose existence is moisture, has always been a puzzle. It must have arisen either from the fact of its effect in the shape of wood reduced to powder being more often witnessed than the living organism which caused it, or from the necessity of distinguishing it from *wet-rot*. Its scientific name is *Merulius lacrymans*, or *Boletus lacrymans*, so termed from the moisture that drips from it like tears. It is one of the few members of the fungus tribe that, like the mistletoe, bears leaves, which in its case resemble those of the vine. It must not be confounded with the *Polyporus hybridus*, or fungus called the agaric of the oak, with which the Druids of old played many tricks, for this is the child of the oak itself, and the direct cause of the hollow old oaks we have all seen, as well as being answerable for the decay of oak beams and planks that have been laid improperly seasoned. When once the dry-rot fungus has obtained a footing, it will in a very short time destroy all the woodwork in a house, insinuate itself into the interstices of the walls, crumbling them to pieces, play havoc with books by reducing the leaves to tinder, and in fine cause so much mischief as to render a house uninhabitable and necessitate its demolition.

There is no reason, however, why it should ever obtain a footing. We have only to bear in mind that it is a creeping plant, which cannot rise unsupported as high as two inches, and that it has no adhesive powers except in contact with wood, so, if there be no contact of wood with earth, it is harmless. Fortunately, it cannot pass over brick or mortar, else it would rise from our damp cellars and infect half the houses in the kingdom; so the first precaution is to raise all woodwork in the basement on a bed of brick or stone; and if to this condition be added a free circulation of air around the timbers, by inserting gratings in the walls or by other means, so as to prevent an accumulation of the confined and damp air so material to its growth, the chances of its appearance are nil. For the same reason, when laying wall-plates or fixing the ends of rafters a clear space of about an inch should always be left above them and on each side. We have seen an immense roof literally resting on air, the ends of its supporting timbers, owing to the neglect of this simple precaution, having entirely rotted away; the only thing that kept it from falling bodily was the cohesion of its component parts. The practice of covering our floors with oilcloths instead of carpets soon rots them, by stopping the circulation of air; and the custom of keeping tightly closed all the windows of a newly built house, whose walls are full of moisture, in place of leaving them wide open, places the woodwork in an atmosphere more charged with vapour than its own internal contents, and keeps it thereby in an imbibing, in place of an exhaling state, thus sowing the seeds of early decay. If the best seasoned stuff be shut up under such conditions, the quantity of moisture it will imbibe will defeat all the former care that has been expended on it. We pointed out in our article 'A Few Common Errors' (Jan. 7,

1887), the fallacy of attempting to dry a building with gas.

We now pass on to the consideration of those timbers which, like telegraph and hop poles, posts and palings, *must* as a rule have their ends buried in the ground. It would be a hopeless task to attempt to enumerate even a fraction of the preventive measures that have at various times been recommended, many of them patented; and even were we to do so, the reader would find himself after their perusal in a hopeless state of bewilderment as to the particular merits of one over the other, especially as in some instances they are most contradictory. In evidence of this we will cite the two following diametrically opposite opinions, from a certain publication, concerning the proper way of erecting a simple post: 'Larch-posts will last much longer when driven with the thick end into the ground than otherwise. All wood lasts longer when placed in the position in which it grows than by reversing it; which seems to be quite natural, when we consider that, as the tree tapers upwards, the cells and tissues, or veins in which the sap moves, become smaller and less calculated to admit and convey external moisture than when the position of the tree is reversed.' W. Howe of Alleghany Co. relates an experiment made to test the comparative durability of posts set as they grew, or top end down. He says: "Sixteen years ago I set six pair of bar-posts all split out of the same white oak log. One pair I set butts down; another pair one butt down, the other top down; all the others top down. Four years ago, those set butt down were all rotted off, and had to be replaced. This summer I had occasion to reset those that were set top down: I found all sound enough to be reset. My experiments have convinced me that the best way is to set them tops down."

Unless we are sure that the wood be thoroughly well seasoned, it is far better to leave the part above ground naked, than to tar or otherwise paint it, for by so doing we close its pores and prevent all exhalation, which occasions fermentation, and brings on a premature state of decomposition. A rotten scaffold pole or putlog, although of fir and subjected to alternations of wet and dry, and handed down for several generations from father to son, is as rare a sight as a dead donkey. The timber introduced into the outsides of old houses, as in the ancient cities of Chester and Shrewsbury, which were never painted, and are now black with age, is a further striking illustration in favour of this truth. Ends that are to be buried should be first charred and then tarred, and this is the only treatment that will really and effectually prevent their decay by the rot. The charring dries up all the fungus-juices of the wood, and reduces the surface to somewhat the state of charcoal, the incorruptibility of which is attested by undoubted historical facts. The famous temple at Ephesus at its destruction was found to have been erected on piles that had been charred; and the charcoal discovered in Herculaneum after almost two thousand years was entire and undiminished; while little more than a couple of centuries since, some oak-stakes were found in the bed of the Thames in the very spot where Tacitus says the Britons fixed a number of such stakes to prevent the passage of Caesar's army, and these stakes, which were charred to a con-

siderable depth, had completely retained their form, and were firm at the heart. The additional application of coal-tar to the charred end while it is still hot forms, by means of the resin that is left behind after the acid and oils have evaporated, an air-tight and waterproof envelope. The preservative properties of creosote, which entirely prevent the absorption of the atmosphere under all conditions, and are noxious to every form of both animal and vegetable life, are without doubt superlative; but the high cost of the treatment—from fourpence to fivepence per cubic foot—debars its application except in works of considerable magnitude, or where, as in the case of railway sleepers, very large quantities of material are employed.

But there are other enemies, in the shape of insects, to fortify against, whose powers of destruction cannot be ignored; and here again we are confused by the thousand-and-one suggested remedies, of which the following has been proved really efficient. It is well known that kerosene is repellent to worms and insects; saturating the ends to be buried with this oil has proved a safeguard; the supply is kept up by boring a small hole in the post a few feet above ground, slanting down and reaching below the centre, which requires refilling about once in three years. Nearly every kind of oil is equally efficient. In tropical climes like India, the ravages of the white ant must be seen to be credited; the rapid extension of the little earthen mounds, similar to those thrown up by the mole, only about the size of half a cedar pencil, under cover of which they carry on the siege, is astounding, eating out the heart of the stoutest scantlings in a very short time. During the last Madras famine, enormous quantities of grain were stored in the goods-sheds of the Madras Railway, which in consequence had to be secured against the depredations of these pests. This, after many attempts, was at last successfully accomplished by picking up the floors to a depth of six inches and ramming in granite chippings—the white ant, and for that matter the black ant too, will not pass over any hard gritty substance—over which was laid the following mixture to form a surface: Tar, one part; soorkhee (pounded brick), one part; lime, one part; sand, one part—laid on hot and beaten; while the feet of the posts supporting the roof were surrounded with six inches deep of ashes, great care being taken that no clay or earth of any kind got mixed with them.

In the early days of submarine cables, Dr Russel wrote: 'As a mite would in all probability never have been seen but for the invention of cheese, so it may be that there is some undeveloped creation waiting, perdu, for the first piece of gutta-percha which comes down to arouse his faculty and fulfil his functions of life—a gutta-percha boring and eating *teredo*, who has been waiting for his meal since the beginning of the world.' He may be ranked as a prophet; for ten years after, the borer appeared in the *Linnoria terebrans*. And so it is with all building materials: iron has to contend against rust; lead against the solvent and corroding properties of water; brick and stone against climate and weather; wood, as has been shown, against the ravages of rot and insects; and it is only by making known the various preventives and antidotes discovered, that

the general public is able to derive the advantages which accrue from the investigations and experience of those engaged in any particular calling or profession.

A DUBIOUS COMPLIMENT.

BOISTE, a name familiar to philologists and grammarians, was a celebrated maker of dictionaries, at which he worked with an enthusiasm almost unrivalled in that department of labour, and with a degree of success which brought him both reputation and profit. The great Napoleon gave him the post of royal grammarian; and the hard-working student received this flattering testimony to his merit just as he was concluding his grand Dictionary of the French language. Very sweet were those concluding labours, and one may imagine the pleasure with which he corrected the last proof-sheets and complied with the customary form of sending complete copies to the censor of the press. Sweet also were his dreams that night, and the anticipations of the fame and the profit that should accrue to him from the publication of the elaborate work which in a few days would see the light. But, alas! never was the adage that speaks of 'the slip 'twixt the cup and the lip' more strikingly illustrated than in the case of poor M. Boiste. He had retired to rest one night after a pleasant evening with some literary friends, when, disturbed by a movement in his chamber, he woke up to find his bed surrounded by a posse of gendarmes.

'What is it, gentlemen?' said he. 'You have assuredly made some mistake. I am Monsieur Boiste, lately appointed grammarian to the Emperor.'

'Ah!' said the brigadier in command, 'the very man we want. See, sir; here is the order for the arrest of Monsieur Boiste, grammarian.'

The order was in due form, sure enough, and it was but vain to appeal against it. The poor scholar had to turn out and dress; and in a few minutes was seated with his captors in a close carriage, driving rapidly towards the castle of Vincennes.

Having arrived at the prison, the astonished captive was not without hopes that the obstinate silence with which all his inquiries had been met during the journey would no longer be maintained. He now urgently entreated to be informed of the reason for his arrest, at the same time protesting his entire innocence and his known devotion to the Emperor. The official at first paid no attention to his entreaties; but at length, out of respect it may be for the prisoner's gray hairs, condescended to refer to the order of arrest, and after perusing it, coolly answered: 'To secure the public safety.'

Poor Boiste was no wiser than before, but only the more perplexed. He was at once led off to a room fastened with an iron door and grimly grained windows, and there he was shut in, with the prospect of spending months, it might be years, in torturing his brain to discover how it could be that he, who had passed his whole life in the harmless avocation of arranging words in alphabetical order, could possibly have compromised the public safety. 'It cannot be,' he said to himself, 'that I am arrested on account of my book; for it was examined three several

times, was corrected and altered both by the chiefs and the subordinates of the imperial censorship, and everything to which they objected was struck out.'

It was little use spending his days in conjectures that led to nothing, and nothing was to be got by indulging in lamentations; so he began to exert himself. He drew up memorials containing the strongest appeals, and addressed them to all the persons of influence with whom he was acquainted, reminding them all that he had really committed no offence, and that he only required to know the charge against him that he might clear himself.

But week after week rolled away and not one of his letters was answered. At length one of the unfortunate prisoner's memorials fell into the hands of Fontanes, the head of the University of Paris, who knew the blameless character of the lexicographer, and had long held him in esteem. Fully convinced of the innocence of the man, who he knew had devoted a long life to the completion of dry and arduous labours, he watched for an opportunity of mentioning him to the Emperor. The great Napoleon happened to be in one of his gracious moods; he took from Fontanes the captive's written plea, read it over, and agreeing with him that there must be some mistake, summoned the Duke of Otranto to his presence and demanded an explanation.

The Duke knew no more of the matter than they did, and professed himself quite as much surprised at the arrest of Boiste as Boiste could have been to be arrested. True, there was his signature to the order; but then, as often happened, he had probably signed the paper when it was laid before him without reading it. He could give no explanation, and now in his turn he summoned the prefect. The prefect had no explanation to give, really knew nothing of the business, and he sent for his deputy. The deputy, after a search of some days, did contrive to rummage up the original of the fatal document. He hastened with it to the Tuilleries, and then it was discovered that it had been drawn up upon the denunciation of the censor, who had actually accused Boiste of having characterised Buonaparte as a *Spoliateur*. The document afforded no information as to how, when, or where the offence was committed. The censor was immediately ordered to put in an appearance; but he happened to be three hundred miles off, engaged in his periodical tour of inspection and supervision of the provincial press.

'Let the prisoner himself be examined,' said Napoleon. 'It must be a blunder of some one's; for, not to mention that Boiste is incapable of such an act, it really would not be common-sense to insert calumnies in a dictionary.'

Next morning, Boiste was permitted to emerge from his prison, and was driven off to the Duke of Otranto's office, where he found M. Fontanes also awaiting him.

'Sir,' said the Duke, 'you are accused of libelling the august sovereign who rules over this mighty empire.'

'Me accused of a libel! I, my lord! Surely you cannot be serious? A libel comes from *libellus*, a little book—never made one in my life, sir.—Ask that gentleman, sir, the principal of our University; he will tell you that I know too

well the significations and the power of words, to—'

'But, nevertheless,' said M. Fontanes, showing him the accusation, but hiding the signature with his finger, 'read this.'

Boiste read it through as desired.

'Well?' cried Otranto, seeing the tranquil face quite unmoved.

'Is that all?' demanded Boiste.

'All!' said the Duke. 'Quite enough, I should think. I hope, for your sake, it is a mistake.'

'No mistake at all. It is the truth.'

'The truth!'

'Most certainly. I inserted it to do honour to the Emperor.'

'To do the Emperor honour!'

'Yes. To prove that he is as thorough a linguist as he is a warrior.'

'Sir,' said Fouché impatiently, 'we have no time for jesting, and you will find that this is no jesting matter.'

'I have no idea of jesting, I assure you; I should not dream of taking such a liberty with your Excellency.'

'Then be so good as to afford us some explanation.'

'Certainly; there is nothing more easy.' Then taking a copy of his new Dictionary, which lay on the table, he opened it, found the word *Spoliateur*, and pointed to the two words as they stood thus: '*Spoliateur, Buonaparte*'

'And what,' exclaimed the indignant functionary, 'could have tempted you to such a foul libel as that?'

'Libel! I only gave His Majesty the honour that was due to him. I print his name after the word *Spoliateur* as the authority for its use. It was he who first made use of the word; he did so in the tribune, when he was General Buonaparte; he coined the word in the first instance, and it was never known in the French language until he gave it currency.'

The Duke looked at M. Fontanes, and M. Fontanes looked at the Duke, and both smiled in a rather subdued way at this simplest of all possible explanations. Boiste was immediately restored to liberty; but his artless attempt to do credit to the Emperor put him to no inconsiderable expense, as he was compelled to cancel the sheet that contained this very doubtful and certainly undesired honour to Napoleon, and print it anew for the entire edition. And indeed, considering the temper of the times, Boiste thought himself fortunate to get off so cheaply, especially as there were not wanting among his detractors those who did not scruple to insinuate that his professed tribute to the Emperor's genius as a linguist was designed for anything but a compliment.

STORY OF A WILD RABBIT.

A CORRESPONDENT writes: I have recently been reading, in some back numbers of your *Journal*, the articles by a lady, entitled 'Animals I have known and loved.' Amongst her many interesting and amusing descriptions of pets, there is no mention of a wild rabbit; and as we have never met anybody who has tamed one—people whom we have asked even saying that it cannot be done—perhaps our case is uncommon, and may be

interesting to some of your readers; for our rabbit would follow us, and eat out of our hands, and was as affectionate as a kitten. He was caught on the Downs when a few days old, and my mother undertook to try and rear him, allowing him to live for a time in her pocket, and feeding him constantly with milk from a teaspoon. He grew fast, and soon became quite friendly, being fed regularly on bran, fresh leaves, black oats, and any pieces that he could get given him; for he always knew the meal-hours, and would come and beg sweetly by the side of every one round the table. He lived loose about the room, only being put in a box when we were out. We were living in a 'flat' at the time, and he was never allowed downstairs, and no cat was ever allowed up.

Once he was missing for a long time, and we had given him up for lost, when he suddenly came scrambling down the chimney, none the worse, except for a little soot in his fur, as, luckily, no fire had been lighted. He would always come to the call of 'Bun, bun, bun!' and would jump on to our laps, and if allowed, would eat out of our plates. A favourite place for him to sit was on one of our shoulders, where he would sleep for hours, and sometimes gently nibble an ear!

We used to bring him home the red berries off brier-bushes; of these he was particularly fond, never, however, eating the seeds, but leaving them in neat little heaps on the ground. Loaf-sugar, too, he greatly relished—and when he saw it on the table, he would jump up, with the help of a chair or a lap, stand on his hind-paws, and look into the basin—and if the tongs were in his way, would take them in his mouth and lay them on the table, then look in again, take a piece of sugar, jump down with it, and crunch it up, and probably come back for more.

He took great delight in a cabinet in the room where he knew that cake was to be found, and would scratch at the door till he had opened it wide enough to get in; but soon learning that when he made a noise we heard him, and sent him away and locked the door, he took to doing it as quietly as a mouse; and more than once, thinking him unusually quiet and good, we have got up to see where he was, we have found him sitting in the cabinet greedily devouring cake!

He had a hundred pretty, clever ways; but much as we loved him, we were a good deal tried by him. His destructiveness was serious; boots and shoes or bags, if left unguarded, would be nibbled round in a very short time; and I remember well my mother's look of dismay on finding that he had eaten large holes in her petticoat, when she had only thought him asleep on her lap, under her dress for warmth.

We never left him alone for many minutes, as he was sure to be in mischief. Once, when we were going to be away all day, we gave him a large hamper and locked him in a room. When we came home and went to see him, he met us with great delight at the door, having eaten his way out of the hamper—his next amusement having been to scratch a huge hole in the carpet; but he was such a general favourite that even the landlady didn't object very much.

He was now about six months old; and as we were leaving the place, and could not take

him with us, much against our will we gave him away to some friends in town. His fate we have never heard—we have not liked to ask. We know that he was kept for some time; and we have heard of a visit to the store cupboard, where a quantity of scented soap and wax candles was found eaten or destroyed; and since then we have thought it better not to inquire, fearing to hear of a sad end, such as comes in one way or another to most pets.

We had a great love for this little rabbit, and I am sure he had for us; he certainly never seemed to pine for his natural wild life, but always appeared bright and happy. In memory of our affection for him, we feel sorry for his Australian cousins, who, however much they may deserve it, are having a very rough time just now, even without M. Pasteur's treatment coming into force. The interesting article on 'Rabbit Crusading in New Zealand,' in a recent issue of your *Journal*, proves that there at least the life of the wild rabbit is by no means all happiness.

YOU AND I.

We stood by the shining summer sea,
 You and I;
And you whispered some old sweet words to me,
 'Neath the opal sky.
Red sunset tints crept over the sand
As we lingered together, hand in hand,
 Loth to part,
For 'the light that was never on sea or land'
 Shone in each heart.

You sailed away o'er the silver sea,
 You, not I;
And the tender message you left for me
 Was: 'Love, good-bye!'
You traced that message upon the sand,
The proud cliffs towered on either hand,
 Strong and sure;
And I said: 'Thus firm our love will stand,
 And aye endure.'

So you in the busy haunts of men,
 Far from the sea,
Took up the thread of your life again
 Away from me.
The blossoms died in the woodland ways,
The roses dropped from their fading sprays
 At my feet;
But I said: 'There will be golden days
 When we meet.'

We stood once more by the shining sea,
 You and I;
But you whispered no old sweet words to me
 'Neath the cloudy sky.
The wind went sobbing along the sand;
I shivered, and felt no clasping hand.
 We met to part;
And the shadows that deepened on sea and land
 Fell o'er my heart.

E. MATHESON.